



Belgium 2005

Yuri Kazepov

with the collaboration of Stefania Sabatinelli

The *Droit à l'intégration sociale* in the European context

Synthesis Report



on behalf of



European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

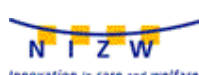




TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION	11
2. THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT OF MINIMUM INCOME POLICIES	13
2.1. Why are social assistance schemes becoming more important in Europe?	13
2.2. What are the characteristics of the European welfare systems within which social assistance policies are embedded?	13
2.3. The impact of changes and the development of activation policies	16
3. KEY ASPECTS OF THE BELGIAN "DROIT A L'INTEGRATION SOCIALE" (DIS)	20
3.1. The main characteristics of the Belgian DIS	20
3.2. The dimensions of implementation	26
3.3. The DIS: a quantitative overview	29
4. RELEVANCE FOR AND TRANSFERABILITY TO OTHER NATIONAL CONTEXTS	33
4.1. individualisation of rights	34
4.2. activation and contractualisation	35
4.3. age targeting	37
4.4. the discretionary power of social assistants	38
4.5. coordination and networking	39
4.6. territorial differences and local inequalities	40
4.7. evaluation and monitoring	41
5. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT	43
ANNEX	44
REFERENCES	47
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	51



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Activation policies in Europe

Over the last three decades, rising unemployment, persisting long-term unemployment and the weakening of family ties increased social vulnerability and, as a consequence, social assistance claimants. The growing pressure on the welfare state set in motion a far-reaching reform trend in the '90s. Overall spending did not change accordingly, but social assistance schemes with tight use of means testing became more important.

The fact that unemployment has become one of the main causes for the increasing numbers of social assistance recipients since the mid-80s and consolidating in the '90s – in a period in which welfare systems underwent cost containment and poor political support – stirred the debate on welfare *dependency* and how to prevent it (highlighting mainly poverty and employment traps). *Not being passive anymore* is the new rhetoric, cross-cutting the whole of Europe, from the Scandinavian countries to Southern Europe.

Activation has become a *magic* word for finding a solution to dependency and attaining – at the same time – two goals:

- a) *Getting people off the payrolls*, thus cutting down public expenditure for social assistance and unemployment measures;
- b) *Empowering unemployed people* by improving their living conditions and increasing their opportunities through *ad hoc* designed accompanying measures.

Our hypothesis is that European countries are undergoing (in relation to social assistance and activation) a deep process of change characterised by an ambivalent *converging path dependency*, that is: particular institutions and narratives (e.g. *contractuality, activation, conditionality, ...*) relating to social policies aimed at combating poverty are converging, but this convergence is occurring within the frame of the overall welfare state settings, bringing about an increased differentiation both among countries and among sub-national territorial levels.

Recent debates – in particular when they also address final safety nets in their classification exercise – point to the existence of *five European welfare systems*,



characterised by a different equilibrium between the main responsible agencies in the provision of welfare i.e. of resources to individuals in case of need. 1) The *Liberal welfare system*, where the *market* is the prevailing mechanism of regulation and integration (in Europe: the UK); 2) the *Social-democratic system*, where state welfare is pervasive and universalistic, and replaces both family and *market* responsibilities (the Scandinavian countries); 3) the *Corporatist system*, where *state* welfare schemes reproduce the socio-economic status that families achieve in the labour market, *reciprocity* is the most important resources allocation form, but family is widely supported by public measures and services (the continental European countries); 4) the *Familistic system*, where family is overcharged with responsibilities, but with little public support (the Southern European countries); 5) the *Transitional model*, where the directions of post-communist reforms are neither clear nor homogeneous (the Central and Eastern European countries).

The Belgian DIS

Like the other countries within the Corporatist system, Belgium shows relatively good performances in social protection. In particular, Belgium has a long tradition of minimum income guarantee. In 1974 the *Minimex* was introduced, a measure of monetary support aimed at guaranteeing living conditions conforming to human dignity to every citizen. In order to be entitled to the *Minimex*, citizens had to demonstrate their resources were below a given threshold and they were available for work.

In 1976, the CPAS (*Centres public d'action sociale*) were created, and the *Aide Sociale* (Social Help) was introduced, with multiple intervention means: a) monetary benefit; b) support services (social guidance, etc.); c) in-kind support (food vouchers, etc.).

In 1993 the law *Programme d'urgence pour une société plus solidaire* introduced a significant move towards active welfare within the frame of the *Minimex*. The implementation of activation programmes was entrusted to the local CPAS.

The law *Droit à l'intégration sociale (DIS)*, passed in 2002, goes in the same direction as it explicitly contains a combination of monetary support and services of labour and social integration. It represents a step towards activation policies developed not only within labour market policies, but also within minimum income measures.



More specifically, the DIS law aims at:

- preventing long-term dependency on income transfers;
- preventing poverty and unemployment traps;
- increasing the sustainability of the social protection system;
- promoting citizens' participation.

Like the Minimex, the DIS is a universalistic last resort measure: all persons have a right to social integration, although the CPAS may oblige them to turn to their families.

Significant financial resources have been devoted to the DIS law. The basic levels of the monetary benefits have been increased and further increases are foreseen before the end of the legislature. Moreover, the CPAS receive a grant from the state for each person receiving monetary support, to avoid budgetary constraints limiting their activity.

Individualised insertion projects are foreseen to accompany the monetary benefit. If the recipient is considered able to work and ready for a real job, the CPAS will develop – together with the claimant – a job-search strategy. Otherwise, an educational or social insertion project can be organised. The job should fit as far as possible the recipient's abilities and wishes. Jobs can be found in the for-profit sector, in the CPAS or the municipality, which can act as direct employers, or in the non-profit sector.

Sanctions are foreseen if recipients give false declarations or omit information about their income status, or any other condition that would affect their right to the DIS, and in the event that they do not respect – without a legitimate reason – the contract. Still, it remains difficult to assess the degree of social workers' discretionary power.

Improvements and critical issues

Aimed at addressing social exclusion as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, the implementation of social integration policies generally involves a number of different institutional and non-institutional stakeholders. In Belgium the picture is further complicated by the federal structure, as competencies on training and labour market mediation for the unemployed have been widely devolved to the regions.



At the local level, the main actors involved in work integration projects are: the CPAS; the PESs; other public offices; Third Sector agencies; health agencies; for-profit firms.

Efficient relations between local social assistance agencies and other relevant offices are crucial to allow on one side stricter controls and thus a more equal application of the measures, and on the other side a more fluent and therefore less expensive procedure. Official procedures of cooperation should be established at the higher institutional levels and explicitly foreseen in official regulations; otherwise, it is left to the individual ability of each social worker to establish useful contacts.

Compared to other countries (in particular South and East European ones), social partners, civil society organisations and local stakeholders participate to a large extent in discussion and evaluation of the minimum income measures in Belgium. All evaluation reports are public and highly accessible to everyone, whereas often such documents are considered confidential, at least at a first stage, as they are considered more a means of internal adjustments than a contribution to general growth of knowledge and awareness. However, this entails a risk of increasing the existing differences in the abilities to access information, due to the IT divide observable among citizens.

The DIS has reaffirmed a clear age differentiation already present in the 1993 law. For young people under 25 and students, activation is at the same time a duty and a right, with a tighter implementation schedule: a concrete project for the insertion in the labour market must be signed within three months from the opening of the recipient's dossier.

Available data confirm that more integration projects involve recipients under 25 than all other age groups. Although there is wide consensus and grounded evidence for the need to concentrate on the social and professional integration of the youngest in general terms, the age limit is questionable. Many social workers see it as artificial, as it impedes evaluation of the resources and capabilities of every single recipient, and differentiation of recipients on the basis of their chances to be placed (back) in the labour market, rather than *a priori* on the basis of their age.

Also due to the process of federalisation that Belgium has undergone in the last decades, important territorial differences are observed in the implementation of the DIS measure. This is not surprising, given the local character of the implementation of social assistance and activation policies, which is at the origin of



territorial differences clearly observable even in countries where the national framework of social policies is stronger, such as the Scandinavian countries, or where the role of the central state is more evident, as France.

The main problematic point has to do with the issue of citizens' equality: if welfare answers substantially differ according to the local context where the social need originated, then citizens of the same country are exposed to different opportunities and, in practice, enjoy different rights depending on where they live.

Transferability

Importing a foreign good practice is always a complex process, in which the input will be filtered not only by initial conditions and the path dependency tendencies, but also by creative management and implementation, adapting the new practice to the specific context, leading to a different output to the expected one.

Seven major issues in the implementation of the DIS law are most relevant to the debate within the EU.

1. Individualisation of rights

From the Peer Review discussion it appears that individualisation of rights fostered by DIS has a positive effect, in particular on the recognition of individual rights (at least in the case of couples without dependent children). It allows for development of individual projects for each family member with individual autonomy in view. Moreover, it permits differentiation between family members who are complying with the project requirements and those who are not. It is then possible eventually to sanction one member of the family without punishing others.

However, the individualisation process could also impede a view of the household as a whole, which is necessary when realising a coherent and integrated social intervention.

2. Activation and contractualisation

The Peer Review discussion shows some consensus around the idea that social assistance should be unconditional in principle. Still, as tight budgets do not allow this, it is reasonable to ask claimants to work. If not enough (adequate)



jobs are available on the labour market, social integration should encompass study or voluntary work. More generally, activation should be considered as part of social integration, thus allowing a combination of paid work and assistance. In this sense, the Belgian DIS legal recognition and emphasis on social integration and accompanying measures, with a single law covering social and employment integration and a legal basis for work in the community, was of particular interest.

Conditionality may well be a means for authorities to deal with fraud, but it should not undermine human dignity. In the discussions the principle of 'opportunity' was considered as preferable to 'conditionality'.

As to the tension that exists between the individual's responsibility and the structural situation, and the fact that success of activation depends also on the economic health of the labour market, participants underlined that employers should also play their part in providing more and better jobs. Differences were highlighted between private employers and non-profit organisations, where the latter seemed more sensitive to social commitment.

There was agreement on the fact that the integration contract should be negotiated at length, and that it should be dynamic, regularly evaluated, and amended as people progress up the 'integration ladder'. Participants were in favour of a balance between rights and obligations, and of a control over the quality of social workers' performance.

3. Age targeting

The targeting of young people was controversial in the Peer Review debate. Some participants felt the age distinction is not relevant, and that solutions should relate to people's problems, not their age. Targeting emerged as a response to limited resources. References to the riots simultaneously taking place in some French cities were made by others to highlight the pertinence of such an age target. Young adulthood is a key moment for breaking a vicious circle of social assistance dependency and of poverty transmission to young children. However, diverting scarce resources could bring a risk of increasing marginalisation among other groups. More consensus was registered in favour of the support for young people, although this should not mean diminished rights for others.

4. Discretionary power of social assistants

The discretionary power that social workers have at different stages is a difficult issue to be addressed in a comparative perspective: i.e. their power to decide



or influence decisions with regard to the support for their clients, which makes significant differences in the application of the law. Because in both highly and loosely formalised systems the degrees of discretion that inform the activities of social workers are relatively high. What makes the difference is related to what can be decided and what impact it may have on the claimant.

In this sense, the separation of administrative issues (related to payments) from social work *strictu sensu* – as happens in many continental European countries – might help. Moreover, an important factor was felt to be the opportunity for recipients to apply to the court if they feel they have been treated unfairly, as in Belgium.

5. Coordination issues

According to the Peer Review debate, services should be integrated, holistic and flexible, with a view to of giving quick and adequate responses to new clients. In order to achieve this, different bodies engaged in integration (employment, welfare) should collaborate. In this sense the Belgian CPAS offer a good 'one-stop-shop' model for other countries.

6. Territorial differences

The main problematic point in the Peer Review discussion deals with the issue of citizens' equality: if welfare answers substantially differ according to the local context where the social need originated, then citizens of the same country are exposed to different opportunities and, in practice, enjoy different rights depending on where they live.

The risk of excessive territorial differentiation is that exactly those local areas that are more in need of social assistance and activation programmes have fewer resources to implement them. The Peer Review debate underlined that not only some territories have more resources than others due to the local socio-economic fabric or employment offer, but also that some political leaders are more dynamic than others. Sometimes, public services themselves need to be activated.

The Belgian national law is useful in setting minimum standards for the DIS, but activation is geared to local needs and opportunities; therefore, some corrective measures have been proposed in order to reduce the degree of territorial variability of implementation balanced with the importance of local flexibility and creativity in adapting activation measures to the local needs and resources.



7. Evaluation and monitoring

The Peer Review debate underlined the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation of activation policies, using comparable standard indicators not only relating to employment. This would also be useful for the adjustment of local disparities. Even if there is no single method adequate to evaluate social integration programmes, the collaboration between different levels of government observed in Belgium is a good example for other countries to make evaluation and monitoring feasible.

Conclusions

Activation policies, in fact, are not just a strategy of getting people “off-the payroll”, they are also an important commitment of European societies towards the less privileged, aimed at empowering them to become full citizens. This is consistent with the respect for human dignity laid down in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The discussions during the Peer Review on the Belgian DIS drew attention to a series of crucial issues to be considered:

1. social integration should be a permanent and universal right;
2. contracts should be a tool in the relationship between services and client instead of being just a means of control or sanctions;
3. activation should be considered as a complex path (social integration, training, etc) instead of a mere job placement;
4. work should be considered as a meaningful experience instead of being perceived as a compulsion and punishment;
5. a multidimensional approach should be envisaged and ‘one-stop-shop’ services should be developed;
6. the causes of non-take-up of social policies should be understood and addressed explicitly;
7. coordination between different services is one of the key elements for a successful practice;
8. national laws should avoid excessive territorial variability without impeding context-related local insertion policies;
9. monitoring and evaluation should become a permanent component of the assessment of outcome.



1. INTRODUCTION

This document represents the synthesis report of the Peer Review process in Belgium. It aims at placing the DIS policy in a comparative European context.

Policies against poverty, in particular social assistance schemes, are becoming more important in all European countries. Numbers of beneficiaries increased almost everywhere in particular during the first half of the '80s, especially in big cities. Later on, activation policies also increased in importance. In rhetoric and practice, they are considered – since the mid-90s – the best possible solution to budgetary constraints, passive attitudes and for empowering people in a condition of need at the local level.

Despite broad commonalities in this converging trend, differences among European countries persist. This is due mainly to the fact that the overall design of the different welfare settings at the national level embodies regulating principles which extend their influence – down to the local level – also to social assistance schemes and activation programmes.

Our hypothesis is that within European countries we are undergoing (in relation to social assistance and activation) a deep process of change characterised by an ambivalent *converging path dependency*, that is: particular institutions and narratives (e.g. *contractuality, activation, conditionality, ...*) relating to social policies aimed at combating poverty are converging. This convergence, however, is occurring within the frame of the overall welfare state settings, bringing about an increased differentiation both between countries and between sub-national territorial levels.

Within this framework of analysis we will address the following questions:

- 1) Why are social assistance schemes becoming more and more important in Europe and in particular those coupled with activation measures?
- 2) What are – more generally – the main features of the *welfare systems* within which social assistance policies are embedded?
- 3) What are – more specifically – the characteristics of the Belgian DIS that are relevant in a comparative perspective?
- 4) What is the impact of the changes in Belgium and what are the critical issues emerging?
- 5) What can we learn from the comparison?



Our aim is to locate the Belgian policies in an international perspective highlighting their *pros* and *cons*. Furthermore we aim at a clarification of the process through which institutions translate vulnerability and social risk into socially defined conditions of need in European countries and the respective welfare models.

An appendix includes some relevant data needed to frame the policy in the European context. All these parts have been further elaborated after the Peer Review meeting on the 7-8 November 2005 in Brussels and according to the debates and feedback received by the country representatives.

1 The same occurred for social promotion organizations some years later with law 383/00.



2. THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT OF MINIMUM INCOME POLICIES

2.1. *Why are social assistance schemes becoming more and more important in Europe?*

Social assistance schemes are becoming more important in all European countries. There are some common trends that increased economic and social vulnerability. In particular we can highlight the following trends:

- a) *the growth of unemployment* after the end of the '70s, the spread of flexible atypical jobs and the persistence of unemployment and long-term unemployment in many countries. This caused many unemployed to resort to social assistance schemes when their insurance-based benefit was/is over.
- b) *the weakening of family ties* (e.g. growth of divorces, separations, single households and single parents). This reduced the possibility to rely on relational resources in developing strategies to cope with economic breakdowns.

Both these changes are more extreme in cities than in rural areas and are, therefore, challenging national and local welfare arrangements. The risks are distributed differently in different countries and regions, also because of different welfare settings, but the overall vulnerability has undoubtedly increased.

2.2. *What are the characteristics of the European welfare systems within which social assistance policies are embedded?*

The challenges outlined above that national and regional (local) welfare systems have to face are, to some extent, similar. However, their institutional heritage makes the picture more complex. Recent debates – in particular when they also consider final safety nets as indicators in their classification exercise – point to the existence of *five European welfare systems*. These are characterised by a different equilibrium between the main responsible agencies in the provision of welfare i.e. of resources to individuals in case of need (e.g. *state, family and market*). *State regulation* (or its absence) has a prominent role as it defines the role of the other agencies and the instruments available to deal with poverty and social exclusion.

The five systems are:



1) *The Liberal welfare system.* Here *state* welfare is conceived as relatively residual and intervenes only when both the *market* and the *family* have failed in allocating resources. The *market* is, however, the prevailing mechanism of regulation and integration in a highly individualised (see positions on the “x” and “y” axis of graph 1) and competitive society. The main example of this model is represented by the US. Among the European countries, the United Kingdom is closest to this model, even though some substantial differences point at a more *state centred* variant of the model, because of the legacy of the Beveridgian welfare state and – comparatively to the US – developed social services. However, poverty (mainly urban) and inequality rates are among the highest in Europe. *Social assistance* is a universalistic measure but with a tight use of the means test.

2) *The Social-democratic system.* Here *state* welfare is pervasive and replaces both *family* and *market* responsibilities and measures are universalistic, addressed to all citizens according to their need. A wide range of in-kind services and monetary transfers is supplied. The welfare *state* is the prevailing agency and *redistribution* is the most important form of resources allocation. All Scandinavian countries belong to this model, even if in the last decades some second-level insurance-based schemes have been introduced. Market dependency, poverty and inequality are the lowest in the EU. *Social assistance* is in this system by far the most generous (especially in Denmark; see table A.1. in the appendix). Recipients are entitled to a number of supplementary benefits (housing benefits, family and child allowances) that, in most cases, lift them over the poverty threshold.

3) *The Corporatist system.* Here *state* welfare is conceived in a meritocratic way, schemes reproduce the socio-economic status that families achieve in the labour market through the position of the breadwinner(s). *Reciprocity* is the most important integration and resources allocation form (see “y” axis in graph 1). The *family* is the prevailing social agency and, coherently, it is strongly supported by specific *targeted* in-kind and monetary state provisions (*active subsidiarity*). Social assistance is still a clear right, but the family is its target much more than the individual. Levels are lower, but still generous¹ (see “x” axis in graph 1). Dependency from the *market* is higher than in the Social-

1 Some data presented in the tables in the appendix give the impression that Austria is more generous than Germany, but the Austrian data refer to the maximum levels of social assistance, which are seldom granted, whereas in Germany it is the guaranteed minimum that is referred to. Exceptional *una tantum* payments (varying a lot according to local arrangements) boost up those levels quite often.



democratic model, but lower than in the Liberal one. Germany (together with Austria and France) is the example of this welfare system, whose origins are to be found in the Bismarckian reforms in the second half of the 19th century. Specific monetary and in-kind measures may vary at the *Länder* level and, again, activation measures differ considerably, though within a framework of guaranteed rights.

4) *The Familistic system*. Here *state* welfare is conceived in a meritocratic and fragmented way, like in the Corporatist model, but it is less generous and very unbalanced in the provision of in-kind services and benefits. Far fewer resources are targeted to *family* policies (*passive subsidiarity*) and to other contributory and means-tested schemes. The consequence is that the *family* is overloaded with social caring responsibilities without or with few resources from the *state*. All South European countries (I, ES, PT, GR) show a high degree of local variation. Policies are highly segmented and targeted to particular categories. Dependency from the market is higher than in the other models and resembles that of the Liberal model with the exception given by the fact that families reduce this dependency (low divorce, low single households, etc.) more extensively. As far as social assistance schemes are concerned, *the Familistic welfare system* is the most problematic one. Levels of benefit are much lower and formal entitlements do not guarantee effective payments. Local differentiation and discretionary power of social workers are much more widespread because of heavy budgetary constraints. The recent reforms in Spain and Portugal and the experimental Italian RMI, go in a direction towards a converging modernisation of social assistance in the Southern countries, introducing activating elements; however, in Italy the measure has been withdrawn, and the Portuguese measures guarantee only very low coverage.

5) *The Transition model* is not yet a consolidated model with clear characteristics. The basis was a quite homogenous distribution of income with – in most cases – below average inequalities. Both the conditions producing vulnerability and the institutional framework aimed at tackling them have experienced a dramatic change since 1989. Deep structural changes in the economy entailed sharp GDP decreases followed by high increases. The reforms implemented in the last decade to accompany these changes and to counter their potentially negative impact have ambivalent consequences, with countries like Poland giving a more important role to market regulation, while others like Slovenia invest more in coordinated market and social policies. These reforms will show their



consequences in the coming years. First signals come from the greater (e.g. Slovenia, Czech Republic) or lesser (e.g. Slovakia) ability of policy transfers to reduce significantly the risk-of-poverty rates.

The five models described show a relatively high degree of coherence (see tab. 1 in the appendix for data) with the configurations social assistance and activation policies have in the different welfare (both local and national) arrangements. These differences reinforce the highly fragmented scenario emerging at the local level as far as activation policies are concerned.

2.3. The impact of changes and the development of activation policies

The overall changes briefly sketched above (§ 1.1.) brought about increased pressure on the welfare state settings which set in motion a far-reaching reform trend in the '90s. Overall spending did not change accordingly, but social assistance schemes with a tighter use of means testing became more important. The fact that unemployment has become one of the main causes for the increasing numbers of social assistance recipients since the mid-80s and consolidating in the 90s – in a period in which welfare systems underwent (and still undergo) cost containment and poor political support – stirred the debate on welfare *dependency* and how to prevent it (highlighting mainly poverty and employment traps). *Not being passive anymore* become the new rhetoric, cross-cutting the whole of Europe, from the Scandinavian countries to Southern Europe (Lødemel and Trickey, 2001; Heikkila and Keskitalo, 2001; Nicaise and Groenez, 2004; Vranken, 2004).

Activation has become a *magic* word for finding a solution to dependency and attaining – at the same time – two goals:

- c) *Getting people off the payrolls* thus cutting down public expenditure for social assistance and unemployment measures;
- d) *Empowering unemployed people* by improving their life conditions and increasing their opportunities through *ad hoc* designed accompanying measures.

The attainment of these goals varies considerably from one welfare system to another and according to the political colour of the municipalities and the existing budgetary constraints. In all cases, however, activation changes the relationship between the recipients and the public administration, widening



the duties of claimants and – only in some positive cases – also their rights². In fact, we can say that differences among welfare models apply also to activation measures, even though the emerging picture is more fragmented and heterogeneous considering the different territorial levels (see § 3.1.5).

The main institutional forms through which these goals have been pursued are more or less all related to the first and most relevant reform addressing this issue: the *Revenue Minimum d'Insertion* (RMI), which was introduced in France in 1988. At the very basis of this reform there are two significant changes which – according to many scholars (Guibentif and Bouget, 1997; CERC, 2005) – provided a major paradigm shift:

- 1) the contractualisation of the relationship between the municipality and the claimant;
- 2) the activating nature of accompanying measures.

All subsequent reforms (e.g. in Spain, Portugal and, at least in the testing phase, Italy, but also in Germany and in Scandinavian countries) followed this pattern of institutionalisation. Nevertheless, the details according to which these main lines of reform have been implemented and translated into specific regulatory frameworks have a quite differentiated impact in the different European countries. Mutual learning (see § 3.3) and institutional shopping are always filtered by the existing national framework and – more importantly – by the interactions new measures have with the overall welfare system.

1) In the Liberal model, former conservative governments during the '80s and early '90s put a strong accent on *workfare* (compulsory activation). Present governments have developed those programmes, tailoring them in a very specific way according to the needs of the different risk categories: so-called *New*

2 To legitimise activation policies, different narratives have been developed which are – in line with their contrasting aims – co-present in the public debate in every country (for an overview see also Vranken, 2004). On the one side, activation policies are presented as a necessity to contain financial and social costs of inefficient and passive unemployment measures, in a moment of fiscal crisis that imposes cuts to the public expenditure. Budgetary constraints due to the EU Monetary Union are also used successfully in the rhetoric. In this discourse, the accent is on the duties of the beneficiaries (especially the duty to work and maintain oneself): citizens who receive public assistance have to give something back. On the other side, what is underlined is the fundamental function that work has in shaping the personality and in fostering the social inclusion and integration of persons. According to this narrative, access to activation programs is a right that the unemployed persons should be able to claim from the public administration, as a key to enter the labour market (again), thus avoiding falling into poverty. In this discourse the accent is on the rights (to work, but also to consume: citizens have the right to be defended from poverty by the state according to need, and not depending on their willingness to activate).



Deal programmes for the young (18-24), the long-term unemployed, for lone mothers, etc., but this compulsory element seemed to remain and to differentiate British cities increasingly among themselves.

2) *The Social-democratic model* has the longest tradition of active labour policies. In the last decade, activating elements have been introduced also into social assistance (which was residual in the overall welfare system up to the '90s), to increase employability of benefit recipients and to contain a very high social expenditure. The introduction of conditionality raises questions of a possible paradigmatic shift taking place in Nordic social policy. This change, however, has been accompanied by more individualised activation plans with strong empowering character. Again, local differentiation is emerging as an important element.

3) *The Conservative/Corporatist model* – to which Belgium belongs – followed a similar trend as the social-democratic countries, even if starting from a much less developed tradition in activation policies. In the second half of the '90s, the measures become increasingly formalised, foreseeing a mixture and balance of punitive and empowering elements accommodating a high degree of local variations and putting often (e.g. in Germany) local administrations under high financial pressure. In Belgium in 1993 a major reform introduced relevant activation elements within the existing *Minimex*, opening up a process that led in 2002 to the new DIS law, explicitly linking social assistance and activation (see § 2).

4) *In the Familistic model*, characterised so far by fragmented and highly targeted welfare policies, examples of last resort measures (Portugal, Spain) have been recently introduced for the first time. They present innovative activation elements resembling the contractual settings characterising the French RMI. Spanish Autonomous Communities, for instance, introduced regional programmes of *Renta Minima de Insercion* between 1989 and 1995 (Ferrera, 2005). Despite a wide inter and intra regional differentiation (see § 3.1.5), these programmes filled the existing gap in social assistance in Spain. The 1996 law in Portugal did the same (Capucha, 2005). Italy tested a similar measure in the 1998-2002 period, but never institutionalised it and actually remains one of the only EU15 countries without a national last resort measure, together with Greece (Matsaganis et al., 2005).



5) *In the Transitional model*, patterns are still unclear and our knowledge is rather limited. Even the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion of the Central and Eastern European countries do not provide an adequate picture of the reforms and adopt a rather vague rhetoric. The impression is that social assistance is not the top priority *vis-à-vis* major structural reforms and that old systems still partly persist in the changed scenario. Replacement rates are, comparatively, low and measures still target resources to specific groups and not to the whole potential population at risk (e.g. in some countries Roma or families with children, etc.).

In the analysis carried out so far, we can observe common trends throughout European countries towards the institutionalisation of social assistance where it was lacking, the introduction of stricter means tests, and the shift towards activation policies. At the same time, however, such common trends are constantly filtered by national specificities, historical inheritance and path dependency. It is within this overall framework that we have to address the Belgian *Droit a l'Integration Sociale*, which exemplifies quite paradigmatically the changes that have taken place.



3. KEY ASPECTS OF THE BELGIAN DROIT A L'INTEGRATION SOCIALE (DIS)

3.1. The main characteristics of the Belgian DIS

The law *Droit à l'intégration sociale (DIS)*, approved on 26 May 2002 and implemented from 1 October 2002, explicitly contains a combination of monetary support and services of professional and social integration. It represents a step towards activation policies developed not only within labour market policies, but also within minimum income measures. In this section, we summarise the reasons for developing this policy, the baseline situation against which the policy will be measured, and the problems it intends to solve in an international comparative framework.

3.1.1. The historical background of DIS

Belgium has a long tradition of minimum income guarantee. In 1974 the *Minimex* law was introduced, a measure of monetary support aimed at guaranteeing living conditions conforming to human dignity to every citizen. In order to be entitled to the *Minimex*, citizens had to demonstrate their resources were below a given threshold and they were available to work.

In 1976 the CPAS (*Centres public d'action sociale*) were created, and the *Aide Sociale* (Social Help) was introduced, with a multiple set of intervention means: a) monetary benefit³; b) support services (social guidance, counselling, etc.); c) in-kind support (food vouchers, etc.).

In 1993 the law *Programme d'urgence pour une société plus solidaire* introduced a significant move towards active welfare within the framework of the *Minimex*. The implementation of activation programmes was entrusted to the local CPAS that already managed the *Minimex*. A first distinction by age was introduced: activation became compulsory for claimants under 25. The idea of a "social contract" was drawn from some of the Belgian NGOs working on social integration that were using social contracts in order to involve beneficiaries in their integration path.

The adequacy of the *Minimex* has been challenged by the consequences of the negative economic conjuncture that hit European countries at the beginning of 2000. In particular, increasing unemployment (also long-term) in Belgium

3 Not without confusion, the name *Aide Sociale* is also often used with reference to this monetary benefit.



questioned the effectiveness of the existing labour market services as well as the financial sustainability of the existing minimum income measure, calling attention to the potential poverty traps.

3.1.2. Reasons for change

With the end of the '90s the "active welfare state" became an explicit political aim and the flagship of the purple-green coalition that came to power in Belgium in 1999 after a long period governed by a Christian-Democratic/Socialist coalition.

This priority was coherent with the EU Lisbon Strategy (2000) aimed at achieving an economy that should be dynamic, competitive, knowledge-based, capable of sustainable growth, with more and better jobs and with greater social cohesion.

Four problematic areas demanded the attention of policy-makers: a) long-term unemployment; b) youth social exclusion; c) immigrants' exclusion; d) educational inequalities.

- a) *Long-term unemployment*: lengthy unemployment represents a social problem because research has shown that the longer persons stay out of the labour market, the harder is their insertion, with all the consequences in terms of loss of autonomy and dependency.
- b) *Social exclusion of young persons*: the proportion of people below 25 years of age among minimum income recipients has been increasing (from 12% to 26% between 1990 and 1999; see table A.2. in appendix). The problem of a significant number of citizens experiencing a long period of dependency on public welfare at the beginning of their adult lives is worrying, due to the consequences that such socialisation can have on further steps in their lives and in terms of wasting human resources.
- c) The *exclusion of registered immigrants* from certain social assistance measures, such as minimum income benefits, represented a flagrant inequality that had to be overcome to achieve a universalistic and inclusive orientation and in order to strengthen their social integration process.
- d) Significant *educational inequalities*, both between geographic areas and between schools in the same local context demanded measures aimed at preventing these inequalities becoming paths into poverty (2001-2003 Belgian NAP).



3.1.3. The goals and target groups of the DIS policy

The DIS targets the development of a multidimensional strategy to address social exclusion and prevent the rise of other social problems in households hit by poverty and/or unemployment. These goals are common to most reformed social assistance schemes developed in Europe from the end of the '90s.

More specifically, the DIS law aims at:

- preventing long-term dependency on income transfers;
- preventing poverty and unemployment traps;
- increasing the sustainability of the social protection system, and allowing significant savings to the public budget, also through the prevention of other social problems;
- promoting citizens' participation.

These aims are quite ambitious, and time is needed in order to evaluate fully how far the new law has met them.

Like the *Minimex*, the DIS is a universalistic last resort measure: all persons⁴ have a right to social integration, although the CPAS may oblige them to turn to their family (parents or children). However, the DIS introduces a further step towards the individualisation of social rights: whereas within the *Minimex* the couple was treated as a whole, within the DIS each of the married or cohabitating partners has an individual right to social assistance.

From this point of view, an important change was introduced in the definition of recipients' categories after a judgement by the *Cour d'Arbitrage*⁵. As a consequence, nowadays couples with children are again treated as a whole, and the entitlement of the household's person of reference covers the partner's entitlement as well⁶. Table 1. below shows the new categories of recipients with the yearly and monthly level of integration income. Recipients receive the difference between their income and the threshold.

4 Each adult person effectively living in Belgium and who a) has Belgian nationality; b) is an EU national; c) is a foreign immigrant registered in the population record, is stateless or a refugee. Young persons are considered as adults if they are married, have children at charge or are pregnant.

5 In the first formulation of the law (2002), couples with or without children were economically treated in the same way, i.e. they were getting the same amount of money. In a way, this represents a step backward in the individualisation of rights reinforcing the strong role of the family and of the subsidiarity principle, characterising also the other countries of the Corporatist welfare model (Julemont, 2005). The disposition was sanctioned by the Arbitration Court in January 2004 for reasons of inequality. In order to answer to the Court's condemnation, a new regulation has been introduced. Now households with children are classified in the same way, regardless of whether parents are single persons or living in a couple (see table 1) (Circulaire 14/12/2004).



Table 1. DIS benefit levels for the different new recipients' categories ().				
Recipient's category	Recipient's new category	Basic yearly amount 2002	Yearly amount 2005	Monthly amount 2005
Cohabiting person ⁷	Person living with one or more persons (not at his/her charge)	4,400	5,004.83	417.07
Single person	Person living alone	6,600	7,507.25	625.60
Person with family at charge	Person living with children <18 or life partner.	8,800	10,009.67	834.14
Source: http://socialassistance.fgov.be/Fr/themes/Stats/Beleidsnota/RMI_3.html				

The critical point of this formulation is that the benefit level is not differentiated per *number* of persons at charge, a feature that was controversial in the *Minimex* law as well. As a consequence, a couple without children gets the same monetary benefit as a single parent or a couple with one or more children at charge. Differently from what happens in other countries, the presence of children is taken into account through generous family allowances to which social assistance recipients are entitled. This might be a relevant strategic decision in terms of legitimacy of welfare spending for groups at risk of poverty. Family allowances come from a different budgetary line and will not contribute to the increase of expenditure for social assistance, avoiding undermining the public support for the DIS.

Finally, the DIS reaffirms a clear age differentiation already present in the 1993 law. For young people under 25 and students, activation is at the same time a duty and a right, with a tighter implementation schedule: a concrete project for insertion on the labour market must be signed within three months of the opening of the recipient's dossier.

3.1.4. The human and financial resources

The implementation of the law is – obviously enough – local, and it is entrusted to the basic local structure of Belgian social assistance, the CPAS, created in

6 Moreover, the change is more formal than substantial. Let's take the case of a couple with two children. In the first formulation of the DIS law, each of the parents would have been entitled to the basic yearly amount of €4,400, i.e. the household would have been entitled to an overall basic yearly benefit of €8,800. With the new formulation, one of the adult members of this household is entitled to a basic yearly amount of €8,800 (category "person with family at charge", see table 1), and his/her entitlement covers his/her partner's as well.

7 Each cohabiting person in the household has an individual right to the social integration benefit.



1976 in order to implement the *Minimex* and the *Aide Sociale* at the municipal level. Quite interestingly, in 2004 their name was changed from Public Centres of Social *Help* to Public Centres of Social *Action*, a semantic shift underlining the move towards a more activating approach in social policies.

The 1976 law did not fix any criteria for the number of beneficiaries per social worker, or any specific financial budget for personnel costs. Practice has shown that therefore wide differences exist between CPAS that invest in staff, and CPAS that overload workers in order to redistribute the new dossiers. This has evident effects on the quality of social work. As a consequence, the 2002 DIS law aims at establishing a first step towards an official treatment of the financial costs for the staff.

For this purpose, the CPAS receive a fixed amount (€278 in 2005) for each new dossier opened, in order to cover the fixed costs of handling the file, carrying out the first reception steps, and initialising the integration project. Nevertheless, the general opinion of CPAS about this way of financing is not completely favourable (Ernst & Young, 2004).

The basic levels of the monetary benefits have been increased, as promised by the Government, by 4% in 2002, and a further increase by 10% is foreseen before the end of the legislature. This is aimed at improving the living conditions of DIS minimum income recipients, in order to maintain a level of human dignity.

The CPAS receive a grant from the state for each person receiving the DIS monetary support. This grant is equal to 50% of the benefit; is increased to 60% if the CPAS has more than 500 DIS recipients, and to 65% if DIS recipients number more than 1,000. The Centres also receive a grant from the state for each recipient they hire within an employment project (100% of the integration income), and for each recipient for whom they pay the training or education costs (covering the entire education costs).

This funding procedure protects the activity capacity of the CPAS, avoiding budgetary constraints limiting the right of access to the measures. This problem affects contexts – for example in southern and some east European countries – where the yearly budget is fixed, and social workers “must do what they can with it”. In the Belgian case, on the contrary, the financial burden is divided between the state, which will take over at least half of the economic cost of intervention, and the regional and local levels, which pay the rest (Lamaitre, 2005).



3.1.5. The regional differences

A major critical issue in social policies is related to territorial differences. Following the process of federalisation in Belgium over the last decades, the current debate on social security reforms ranges between two options:

- social security should be definitely regionalised, in order to avoid implicit economic transfers from one region to the other, and make the management more efficient and adequate to specific local needs;
- social security should not be further regionalised, because less affluent regions will become poorer and local differences do not comply with the equality of rights principle.

As a matter of fact, like many EU countries, Belgium is characterised by significant regional differences in economic development. In particular, Wallonia is less affluent and shows higher unemployment and poverty rates than Flanders. As a consequence, Flanders spends more on social security and get back less in terms of subsidies. The same occurs in Italy with the less affluent *Mezzogiorno* and in Germany with the eastern *Länder*.

Social security remains in Belgium a matter regulated at the federal level. However, its implementation is obviously local and services targeted to persons such as orientation, training, and mediation, can be quite diversified. Local variability concerns in particular the following areas:

- the proof of the recipient's condition of need;
- the recipient's obligation to collaborate with the CPAS;
- the recipient's availability to work;
- the recipient's student status;
- the supremacy of family solidarity over social solidarity.

In all these cases, the Flanders jurisprudence seems to interpret the law in a stricter way than the Wallon one, in particular, in relation to individual and family responsibility. In fact, Dutch-speaking courts generally tend to:

- make recipients responsible for demonstrating they have insufficient resources;
- sanction lack of collaboration by recipients more severely, by largely approving the CPAS' decisions about partial temporary suspensions of benefit;
- assign to recipients the responsibility for demonstrating their availability to work;
- not consider insertion in a school cycle as a sufficient condition to be exempted from availability to work.



By contrast, part of the Wallon jurisprudence tends to consider that even though family solidarity has supremacy over collective solidarity, it is still society that is responsible for keeping family and social relations solid (*ibidem*). So the richest and most dynamic region turns out to be also the strictest one from the point of view of the application of sanctions.

3.2. The dimensions of implementation

3.2.1. Individualised projects

In order to assess the eligibility of the claimant, the CPAS foresees a preliminary inquiry into family and personal (economic and social) conditions of the claimant and opens an administrative dossier for each individual recipient. If the recipient is considered able to work and ready for a real job, the CPAS will develop – together with the claimant – a job search strategy. The job should fit the recipient's abilities and – as far as possible – the recipient's wishes. It can be found in the private for-profit sector, in the CPAS or in the municipality which can act as direct employer, or in the non-profit sector. Recipients will sign a real work contract and will be paid at least the minimum wage.

As far as claimants under 25 are concerned, the search for a suitable job or the elaboration of an individualised project is compulsory and must be done within the first three months after the application. If recipients do not fulfil the steps defined in the individualised project, payment of the monetary support can be temporarily and/or partially suspended on the basis of a discretionary evaluation by social assistants.

In all cases in which recipients are not able to work, the CPAS has to prepare an individualised vocational project together with them. Such a project will explicitly indicate the steps of the vocational integration, and recipients have the right to participate in drafting the project and in defining its contents. In this sense the Belgian measure seems closer to Danish activation policies, in which the co-definition of the integration path has a major importance, than to British ones (Barbier, 2001). Steps may foresee training, work experience, protected work periods in social organisations, etc. The CPAS pays the training costs, and during this period recipients are entitled to an *integration income* (see table 1), and may also be entitled to an additional help (*aide supplémentaire*).



Young persons who have not completed compulsory school, or have not attained vocational skills to apply on the labour market, can prepare together with the CPAS an individualised integration project aimed at the attainment of compulsory school graduation, vocational training, or university graduation in case of university drop-out.

The CPAS will verify whether the family of origin can contribute to the educational costs, or whether the person is entitled to a scholarship; otherwise recipients will be entitled to an *integration income*, conditional on an evaluation by the CPAS (see § 2.1.5. and table 1).

3.2.2. Sanctions

Sanctions are foreseen when recipients give false declarations or omit information about their income status, or any other condition that would affect their right to the DIS. The payment of income integration can be suspended partly or totally for a maximum period of six months (12 months in case of fraud). Sanctions can also be foreseen if the recipient does not respect – without a legitimate reason – the obligations foreseen in the contract. On the basis of information reported by the social workers, the Municipal Council has the discretionary power to decide whether to suspend partly or totally the payment of the integration income for up to one month maximum, and up to three months in case of recidivism within one year.

As we shall see below, it is rather difficult to assess the degree of social workers' discretionary power, and therefore the diversity in case management between structures, territories, or categories treated.

3.2.3. Local stakeholders and coordination practices

Because they aim to address social exclusion as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, the implementation of social integration policies generally involves a number of different institutional and non-institutional stakeholders. In Belgium the picture is further complicated by the federal structure, as competencies on training and labour market mediation for the unemployed have been widely devolved to the regions.

At the local level, the main actors involved in professional integration projects are: a) the CPAS; b) the PESs and c) Third Sector agencies.

a) The CPAS are the main actors in DIS implementation. Management of the staff, including evaluation of the number of social workers needed, is decen-



tralised. As a consequence, variations in the organisation of the administrative work may be wide. The CPAS can also be involved as direct employers of the recipients, in order to provide them with an opportunity for social work or a protected job (Lamaitre, 2005).

b) The labour market services (PESs) are organised on a regional basis. Their local offices provide mediation between unemployed and employers, counselling and training. In recent years some of their activation programmes for the unemployed have been opened to social assistance recipients as well.

c) Third Sector organisations are involved in the DIS integration projects in order to provide recipients either with a protected work experience, in the secondary labour market, or with a real paid job. These two kinds of opportunities are addressed to different kinds of recipients, presenting different backgrounds and competences. Some social organisations provide both kinds of contracts, while others are more specialised.

No legal framework exists for the coordination of these and other local actors involved in the DIS implementation. As a consequence, great variations are observed in the kind of relations they establish, ranging from the mere exchange of information, up to real networking on concrete recipients' cases, with a shared methodology and coordination of the different steps. Such differences depend highly on the local tradition of cooperation, on the role of individual social workers and mediators, and on the availability of resources supporting the coordination initiatives (Ditch and Roberts, 2002).

The CPAS need to work closely together with the local labour market services (VDAB, FOREM, ORBEM, BGDA), but they often experience difficulties in their relations with these services. On one side the CPAS fear being perceived as the newcomers on the scene of labour market insertion. On the other, social workers fear that the labour market services cannot be stimulated to work towards the insertion of DIS recipients, seen as the most difficult cases to be placed in the labour market (Ernst & Young, 2004).

Recently, initiatives have been taken to enhance coordination on labour market integration projects. Consultative platforms were established at the local level. Moreover, the CPAS have been allowed to outsource some activities and manage others in partnership with other local actors. Finally, in Flanders, CPAS, PESs and Third Sector organisations jointly set up 130 'employment shops', combining their professional integration activities. Results in terms of stronger coordination are not clear yet.



Private for-profit entrepreneurs are involved in the integration projects that meet the most ambitious objectives of the CPAS i.e. the integration of recipients in the 'real' labour market, through a non-protected job that guarantees their monetary independence, and proves their ability to cope with everyday tasks. Municipalities are actively involved, as well, in the concrete implementation of the integration projects through the supply of work opportunities to DIS claimants in other municipal offices, agencies or sectors, outside the CPAS, which cannot absorb the whole demand for paid jobs from DIS recipients. Health agencies are involved in assuring the best possible living conditions and also in assessing claimants' ability to work and thus their chances of entering the labour market.

3.3. *The DIS: a quantitative overview*

Since 1975, the number of minimum income recipients has been steadily growing. A reduction occurred only in 1999. Since 2003 a new increase can be observed. Yet a direct comparison is difficult, as recipients' categories changed a few times since 2002 (see § 2.1.5). Brussels is the region that shows the strongest increase; here the number of minimum income recipients grew from 8.3 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1993, to 19.2 in 2004, whereas at the federal level the increase was less than 3% (table 2). This is coherent with the fact that big urban areas generally concentrate poverty and social exclusion (Mingione, 1996).

Table 2. Incidence of minimum income recipients per 1,000 inhabitants in the different Belgian Regions (1993-2004).				
	Flanders	Wallonie	Brussels	Belgium
1993	3.8	7.9	8.3	5.6
1999	5.0	11.9	15.1	8.2
2004	4.3	11.1	19.2	8.0

Source: http://socialassistance.fgov.be/Fr/themes/Stats/Beleidsnota/RMI_3.html

An analysis by recipients' category and gender shows that single persons represent more than half of all *Minimex* or DIS recipients from 1994 until 2003, undergoing a small decrease only since 2004. A predominance of single mother households is found among female recipients, and a majority of single men living alone among male recipients. This confirms that separation and divorce



or lone-parenting represent a strong risk of impoverishment, especially with the presence of young children.

An interesting point – given the specificities of the DIS law – emerges from the analysis of the age of recipients. As shown in table A.4., persons between 18 and 24 years of age represent 23% of recipients at the federal level. This figure is more than 25% in Wallonia. The proportion of recipients under 30 has shown a decrease in 2001-2002, but it has increased again in recent years. An analysis by nationality shows that over 20% of recipients were foreigners in 2003, mostly non-EU immigrants, refugees and stateless people, concentrated in Brussels.

In 2003 almost 30% of recipients received only partial benefit, which can be just slightly lower than the full payment, depending on the starting household disposable income. Family allowances are not counted in the household disposable income and thus do not affect the amount of benefit received. Interestingly enough, 18% of all recipients also received an unemployment benefit.

A monitoring system was created in 2000, based upon 60 representative CPAS. Table 3 presents data on the evolution of beneficiaries in activation measures, taking into account that in 2002 a shift took place from the pre-existing *Minimex* to the new DIS.

Article 60 §7 of the 1976 law establishing the CPAS foresees the recipient's placement in an NGO, a municipal or intermunicipal office or agency; article 61 foresees the placement of recipients in a for-profit firm; "activation" refers to training and requalification programmes. As shown in table 3, since the end of the '90s the number of beneficiaries inserted in some kind of integration programme has steadily grown, having more than doubled in absolute values. This growth is more noticeable in the small CPAS than in the big or medium-sized ones (Ernst & Young, 2004). We can therefore assume that the DIS law has stimulated and helped the small structures to invest in activation more than they could do before. A territorial analysis shows that the Brussels Region registers the biggest growth in recipients activated (*ibidem*).

Nevertheless, in general terms, recipients on integration programmes still represent a minority of all minimum income recipients, growing from 5% in 1999 to 13% in 2004. Moreover, despite an increase in the activation programmes, placement in public offices or NGOs (article 60 §7) remains absolutely predominant, representing 85,2% of all integration projects realised. These figures are coherent with the results reported for 2003 by the evaluation report by Ernst & Young (2004), which carried out a survey on a sample of CPAS.



Long-term independence is a major aim that can be achieved primarily in the labour market, and would therefore need closer contact with the private for-profit actors (see also § 3.1.4). Moreover, the great majority of these projects are realised directly within the CPAS. This may mean a good capacity of the CPAS to absorb the demand for work experience, but may also imply a lesser ability to build job opportunities in coordination with other local stakeholders. Nevertheless, the very low figure relating to article 61 should be partly compensated by Plan Activa, a work experience programme introduced in 2002, and included here in the data on activation.

Table 3. Recipients in integration programmes by type of integration 1999-2004 (V.A.)						
Year	1999		2002		2004	
	A.V.	%	A.V.	%	A.V.	%
Art 60 §7	4.495	92,3	7.821	82,6	10.820	85,2
Art 61	116	2,4	304	3,2	170	1,3
Activation	257	5,3	1.348	14,2	1.711	13,5
Tot recipients in integration projects	4.868	100,0	9.473	100,0	12.701	100,0
Tot recipients	83.521		69.882		82.786	
% recipients in integration projects	5,8		13,6		15,3	
Source: own calculations on http://socialassistance.fgov.be/Fr/themes/Stats/Beleidsnota/RMI_3.html						

Ernst & Young results show a growth of almost 35% in the number of individualised projects prepared for minimum income recipients between 2002 and 2003, the first year of implementation of the DIS law. Coherently with the age dispositions of the law, the great majority (85% in 2002) of individual projects cover recipients under 25. Moreover, individual projects for the over-25s decreased during the first year from 15% to 12%. This seems to suggest a risk that adult recipients are disregarded from the point of view of activation resources. Among the under-25s, more than half are involved in a 'Student project', confirming the emphasis on the maximisation of human capital.

Evaluation results point at an increase in recipients sent back to responsible family members as well as of CPAS recovering resources from them, and – instead – a decrease in sanctions applied to recipients. These data are too weak



to allow an analysis of the reasons for this fall, apart from the fact (confirmed by the qualitative study) that the CPAS seem to make an effort to apply the law in a strict way from the administrative point of view, paying the monetary benefit only in absence of other resources, including extended family (Ernst & Young, 2004).

It is not yet clear what results this law may achieve in terms of the number of recipients succeeding in entering the 'real' labour market. Previous data referring to the second half of the '90s (Groenez and Nicaise, 2002) are a good starting point for the analysis. First of all, every year, over one third of minimum income recipients move to social security, work or other sources of income. Obviously enough, stronger groups – that is to say male, highly educated, healthy, Belgian – have more chance to move in this direction. In particular, men generally reach inclusion through work, while women are more likely to do the same through marriage and, in the opposite direction, they are likely to fall into exclusion after separation. Finally, women leave support measures more often because of suspension of benefits than because they enter the labour market (*ibidem*).

The same study also tells us that in the generous and articulated Belgian welfare system there is a problem of access to measures, mainly due to non take-up: potential recipients do not claim any support because of fear, shame and/or lack of information (*ibidem*). Unfortunately, we don't know whether and how far the new DIS law improves this situation. Nevertheless, signals from qualitative researches are not fully comforting on the recipients' degree of information about the new law (Ernst & Young, 2004).



4. RELEVANCE FOR AND TRANSFERABILITY TO OTHER NATIONAL CONTEXTS

Importing a foreign good practice is always a complex process, in which the input will be filtered not only by initial conditions and the path dependency tendencies, but also by creative management and implementation, adapting the new practice to the specific context, leading to a different output than the expected one. Moreover, treating different contexts in a similar way may give rise to new inequalities, in that it may not be fair – nor efficient – to give similar answers to different social needs. The Peer Review process highlighted that this fact should not preclude looking for features that might be useful for mutual learning, arising from comparative analyses. The European Commission together with the Social Protection Committee provides other opportunities to exchange information, e.g. through the assessment of the content and implementation of the National Action Plans for social inclusion (NAPs/Incl).

What emerged from the comparative analysis and the Peer Review debate confirms the need for cautious consideration. Countries belonging to the universalistic welfare cluster tend to underline the structural causes of social exclusion, and to socialise the risk and the consequences of being socially excluded, through preventive policies, generous replacement rates and wide activation measures stressing the empowerment of the recipients. Countries belonging to the Liberal (Anglo-Saxon) cluster tend rather to stress individual responsibility among the causes of social problems. Here, activation is closer to a workfare interpretation, and recipients' duties tend to be emphasised more than their rights. In the countries belonging to the Corporative-Conservative (continental European) cluster, like Belgium, a kind of balance can be observed between empowerment and workfare. Through the DIS implementation, however, Belgium shows – at least partly – a move towards more universalistic features.

In the Familistic (Southern European) countries, where social policies are particularly weak, the family is mostly charged with the responsibility for supporting individuals in case of social and economic difficulty. Finally, in the countries belonging to the cluster that we defined as in transition, current trends show heterogeneous tendencies going in the direction of all four existing models.

In this paragraph we will address seven major issues in the implementation of the DIS law, which are most relevant to the international debate:



1. individualisation of rights;
2. activation and contractualisation;
3. age targeting;
4. the discretionary power of social assistants;
5. coordination issues;
6. territorial differences;
7. evaluation and monitoring.

4.1. Individualisation of rights

From the Peer Review discussion it appears that the individualisation of rights fostered by the DIS has a positive effect, in particular the recognition of individual rights (at least in the case of couples without dependent children). It allows for each family member to develop an individual project with a view to individual autonomy. Moreover, it allows a distinction between family members who are complying with the project requirements and those who are not. It is then possible, if necessary, to sanction one member of the family without punishing others.

However, the individualisation process increases the administrative work. It might also impede a view of the household as a whole, which is necessary when realising a coherent and integrated social intervention. After all, the process aims to take into consideration the multi-dimensional causes and effects of social exclusion on one side, and the coordination of different steps of social intervention on the other.

It has been also highlighted that despite the modifications introduced in 2004, the number of children at charge remains insufficiently considered in the DIS. Economic difficulties experienced during childhood affects one's chances of achieving a school degree and entering the labour market with the necessary resources, thus decreasing one's chances of reaching economic independence during adulthood. Eliminating child poverty is a key step in combating the inter-generational transmission of poverty, and it constitutes one of the EU priorities for a more cohesive and competitive European society. Efforts should be made to treat families with and without children equally from the point of view of benefit levels. It has still to be assessed if family allowances are an adequate means of taking into account the size of the family within the DIS.



4.2. *Activation and contractualisation*

Activation policies have been assessed in international research by considering their main features and distributing countries on an ideal *continuum* between 'social integration' and 'workfare'. The distribution of countries along that *continuum* reflects the main characteristics of the respective welfare states. The DIS legislative reform and its implementation have moved Belgium more in the direction of activation. In particular, it is towards the empowerment and social integration group that the DIS reform moves the Belgian case, as the new law foresees wide free choice and participation of recipients during the integration path, while sanctions seem to be applied in a rather mild way. In this sense, the Belgian measure seems to follow the French RMI orientation, calling for a greater sharing of responsibilities between the individual and society at large, with an emphasis – even in the name of the measure – on social integration and citizenship rights.

The Peer Review discussion shows some consensus around the idea that social assistance should be unconditional in principle. Still, as tight budgets do not allow this, it is reasonable to ask claimants to work. If not enough (adequate) jobs are available on the labour market, social integration should encompass study or voluntary work. More generally, activation should be considered as part of social integration, thus allowing a combination of paid job and assistance. In this sense, the Belgian DIS legal recognition, and emphasis on social integration and accompanying measures, with a single law covering social and employment integration and a legal basis for work in the community was of particular interest.

Conditionality may well be a means for authorities to deal with fraud, but it should not undermine human dignity. In the discussions the principle of 'opportunity' was considered as preferable to 'conditionality'.

As to the tension that exists between the individual's responsibility and the structural situation, and the fact that successful activation depends also on the economic health of the labour market, participants underlined that employers should also play their part in providing more and better jobs. Differences were highlighted between private employers and non-profit organisations, where the latter seemed more sensitive to social obligations.

There was agreement on the fact that the integration contract should be negotiated at length, and that it should be dynamic, regularly evaluated, and amended as people progress up the 'integration ladder'. Participants were in favour of a balance between rights and obligations, and of a control over the quality of social workers' performance.



Almost all European countries are introducing elements of activation in minimum income schemes, either through incremental reforms or through new measures.

Luxembourg has a system rather similar to the Belgian one, but in a different context due to the small size of the country and the low level of unemployment. Here the payment of social support is smooth and rapid, but sanctions are stricter (allowing for withdrawal of 100% of benefit), and more often applied.

In the Netherlands, a law was recently introduced with features similar to those of the DIS, especially in promoting reintegration of citizens through a coordination of employment and welfare issues.

As far as the new EU member states are concerned, in Estonia a new law will come into force at the beginning of 2006, with the explicit aim of activating the long-term unemployed. Hungary, as well, is considering an activation approach that would bring different measures together in one system.

In Slovakia an important reform took place in 2003, foreseeing activation schemes for people in need who want to access benefits which guarantee basic living necessities (shelter, clothes and one meal a day). Further support is granted for housing, care services etc. if people are unable to work. Recent research by the Centre for Work and Family Studies showed that 70% of claimants could be activated through local authority jobs or volunteering. Nevertheless, activation programmes as they are presently designed (that is through 'small municipal jobs' do not seem sustainable, because activated recipients tend to return to benefits after about six months. The question is how to create sustainable workplaces.

The prevention of social exclusion also depends on wider labour legislation, family policies helping households to cope with the costs of raising children, and housing policies, given that housing costs are increasingly reported to be a cause of social exclusion in various EU countries even for households with employed members (e.g. Italy, France, Belgium). These are expensive policies, but they have the potential to make a more long-lasting impact on recipients' empowerment. In order to tackle the multiple dimensions of social exclusion, activation programmes, even though articulated, are not enough. For recipients with multidimensional problems, policy patterns with a strong emphasis on social and human development seem more adequate, with an integrated approach that tackles the whole range of social problems. An approach focused on more socially oriented forms of integration satisfies two needs: a) it represents evidence that an activation step was followed and completed by the recipient. This is important also in view of the management of the contract



between the CPAS and the recipients; b) it enriches the personal resources that recipients can bring to the labour market and – more broadly – to their lives, and at the same time it enhances the human capital of society at large, in line with the EU Lisbon Strategy.

4.3. *Age targeting*

In the Belgian DIS, the compulsory character of activation is clear only in the case of recipients under 25. For those over 25, the payment of an integration income *can be*, but does not have to be linked to an integration project. Available data confirm that many more integration projects involve recipients under the age of 25 rather than all other age groups.

Focusing on the youngest recipients implies at least two positive premises. First, it prevents their falling into long-term unemployment and social assistance dependency, by attempting to interrupt the downward path at an early stage. Second, it concentrates efforts and resources on that group of recipients that *a priori* has most chance of achieving independence through labour market participation, thus increasing the likelihood of the integration programmes' success.

Although there is wide consensus and grounded evidence about the need to concentrate on the social and work integration of the youngest in general terms, the age limit is questionable. Many social workers assess it as artificial, as the focus on age limits their scope for differentiating between recipients on the basis of their chances of getting (back) into the labour market. Moreover, this approach risks excluding more adult recipients from integration opportunities, raising the question of equal opportunities across age groups.

This dilemma is related to targeting *per se* and emerges out of the budget constraints that characterise social policies in general. Activation of multi-problematic social assistance recipients is more complex and needs more time than activation of unemployment benefit recipients. Thus, if the number of activation beneficiaries increases in absence of important public financial investments, activation efficiency may decrease. The (non-intended) result is that those with less personal resources and more cumulated causes of social exclusion will lag behind in the (re)integration process and the feeling of relative deprivation might even increase. The targeting is, then, a way to ensure that a real accompaniment to social and work integration will be reserved for at least some of the recipients.



The targeting of young people was controversial in the Peer Review debate. Some participants felt the age distinction is not relevant, and that solutions should relate to people's problems, not their age. Targeting emerged as a response for limited resources. References to the riots simultaneously taking place in some French cities were made by others to highlight the pertinence of such an age target. Young adulthood is a key moment for breaking a vicious circle of social assistance dependency and of poverty transmission to young children. However, diverting scarce resources could bring a risk of increasing marginalisation among other groups. More consensus was registered in favour of the support for young people, although this should not mean diminished rights for others.

In general terms, a universalistic measure diminishes its intervention potential if it is modified by the introduction of target groups. Particular groups concentrating social needs or cumulating different causes of exclusion could be better supported through *ad hoc* integrative programmes, implemented at the local level (e.g. the Swedish case).

Age targeting is observed in the UK, with a specific activation measure (New Deal for Youth) addressed to young unemployed. Other countries, on the contrary, tackle the youth integration problem in completely different ways. Luxembourg, for instance, introduced a minimum income similar to the DIS in 1986, establishing the right to financial assistance and the duty to be active, but here entitlement is limited to 25 to 60-year-olds. Germany has traditionally prevented the phenomenon of high youth unemployment through the development of a very effective dual apprenticeship system which eases the school-to-work transition. On the contrary, in the Southern European countries, youth unemployment is not specifically targeted by activation measures, as young people are supported rather by the family of origin than by the social assistance scheme. This is particularly true in Italy and Greece, where social assistance is almost non-existent. Here, such disregard of the youth condition is, by the way, reinforcing a widespread delay in entry into adulthood, decreasing Italian birth rates to a worrying level.

4.4. The discretionary power of social workers

The discretionary power that social workers have at different stages, i.e. their power to decide or influence decisions with regard to the support for their clients, which makes significant differences in the application of the law, is a



difficult issue to be addressed in a comparative perspective. In both highly and loosely formalised systems the degrees of discretion that inform the activities of social workers are relatively high. What makes the difference relates to what can be decided and what impact it may have on the claimant. In particular, two steps in the integration process in which the discretionary power of the social workers seems particularly important in Belgium are:

- judging the level of recipients' accomplishment of the integration contract, and as a consequence deciding the application of sanctions;
- the payment of the *Aide Sociale* and/or other 'additional' supports.

In these steps, the result of social workers' personal enquiry and evaluation makes the difference, and has a direct effect on the type and quantity of support received by citizens. This has been reported in almost all the EU countries, including Scandinavia, even if here discretion is mostly used to favour the claimant, and applied mainly to accompanying measures and the definition of insertion plans (Ditch and Roberts, 2002).

In other contexts – Southern and some Eastern European countries – discretion plays a major role already in the definition of the amount and duration of the benefit the recipient can claim. In this sense, the separation of administrative issues (related to payments) from social work *strictu sensu* – as happens in many continental European countries – might help. Moreover, an important factor was felt to be the opportunity for recipients to apply to the court if they feel they have been treated unfairly, as in Belgium.

4.5. *Coordination and networking*

According to the Peer Review debate, services should be integrated, holistic and flexible, in order to give quick and adequate responses to new clients. To achieve this, different bodies engaged in integration (employment, welfare) should collaborate. In this sense the Belgian CPAS offer a good 'one-stop-shop' model for other countries.

The Belgian DIS confirms that coordination is crucial for the implementation of activation measures that, by definition, involve different stakeholders from different sectors (public, for-profit and non-profit) and at different institutional levels. The patterns of coordination among the local actors are not evident, and they are strongly dependent on earlier coordination traditions and resources (human, monetary, relational, informative and normative) available in the specific context. In particular, the Belgian case highlights the difficulties of coordination at three stages of the activation process:



1. *Application reception and analysis of eligibility conditions:* in this preliminary phase, it is crucial that efficient relations between local social assistance agencies and other relevant offices are established, in order to allow on one side stricter controls and thus a more equal application of the measures and on the other side a more fluent and therefore less expensive procedure. Official cooperation procedures should be established at the higher institutional levels, and explicitly foreseen in official regulations; otherwise, it is left to the individual capacity of each social worker to establish useful contacts.
2. *Design and identification of resources for the individualised integration project:* in this central phase, it is fundamental that local social assistance agencies can count on the experience, competencies and services provided by the labour market services PESs, in order to widen the integration chances for the recipients. In Belgium, many CPAS report difficult relations with those services. Belgian PESs do not distinguish between unemployment benefit recipients and social assistance beneficiaries. As a consequence, social assistance recipients risk failure and subsequent labelling as 'non-placeable' unemployed, while real integration efforts might concentrate only on unemployment benefit recipients and on young DIS beneficiaries. This would perpetuate the existing segmentation of citizens outside the labour market;
3. *Job experiences, job achievement:* in this final crucial phase, stronger relations are necessary between local social assistance agencies and labour market actors, in order to increase the probability of success.

4.6. Territorial differences and local inequalities

The main problematic point in the Peer Review discussion deals with the issue of citizens' equality: if welfare answers differ substantially according to the local context where the social need originated, then citizens of the same country are exposed to different opportunities and, in practice, enjoy different rights depending on where they live.

Austria has nine different provincial laws governing social assistance, without an overall approach. Reform projects are being debated, the first step of which would be a national law to harmonise measures, while the second would entail minimum standards for activation, which in some places seems to be little more than a means of discouraging claimants from applying for benefits.



A common legal base regulates social assistance schemes in Slovakia's eight regions. In Hungary, also, local government runs social assistance schemes, with provision varying substantially among different regions and particular problems in implementing activation programmes in small villages.

Similarly, in Romania, where activation is separate from minimum income and organised at the regional level, small local authorities have little capacity to offer a wide range of services or organise community work. Moreover, in rural areas there are few opportunities for regular employment. Claimants must undertake community work to receive payments, but this is not recognised as real employment and therefore they lose pension rights. Local authorities have discretion over awarding benefits, but a lot of small rural communities lack the administrative capacity to carry out inquiries.

The risk of excessive territorial differentiation is that exactly those local areas that are more in need of social assistance and activation programmes have fewer resources to implement them. The Peer Review debate underlined not only that some territories have more resources than others due to the local socio-economic fabric or employment offer, but also that some political leaders are more dynamic than others. Sometimes, public services themselves need to be activated.

The Belgian national law is useful in setting minimum standards for the DIS, but activation is geared to local needs and opportunities; therefore, some corrective measures have been proposed in order to reduce the degree of territorial variability of implementation.

The Peer Review participants highlighted the importance of local flexibility and creativity in adapting activation measures to the local needs and resources. The CPAS represent spaces where citizens can explore their role in society, not just in the labour market.

4.7. Evaluation and monitoring

The Peer Review debate underlined the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation of activation policies, using comparable standard indicators not only relating to employment. This would also be useful for the adjustment of local disparities. Even if there is no single method adequate to evaluate social integration programmes, the collaboration between different levels of government observed in Belgium is a good example for other countries to make evaluation and monitoring feasible.



In comparison to other countries, Belgium shows a positive landscape as to evaluation, monitoring and transparency. The first results of the permanent evaluation of the DIS is already available, both statistical and qualitative. Moreover, the Crossroads Bank of Social Security will bring together information and boost collaboration between local authorities, collecting data on what is happening at grass-roots level *at the present time*, thus allowing more up-to-date evaluation of services and speedy responses to cases of need. The option of a sort of regional Peer Review is also being discussed, where CPAS could compare experiences, and territorial specificities could be confronted. Moreover, social partners, civil society organisations and local stakeholders enjoy a good degree of participation in the evaluation and discussion on the minimum income measures. All evaluation reports are public and highly accessible to everyone, whereas often such documents are considered confidential, at least at a first stage, as they are considered more a means of internal adjustments than a contribution to general growth of knowledge and awareness.



5. CONCLUSIONS

The process through which institutions translate vulnerability and social risk into socially defined conditions of need has, in recent years, been characterised in most European countries by the implementation of activation policies. These policies demonstrate a large number of common features, based on contractual agreements and a relatively similar design.

Despite existing differences, all European countries implement activation measures and in so doing they point to the important role played by public policies in addressing poverty and social exclusion. Activation policies, in fact, are not just a strategy of getting people 'off-the payroll', they are also an important commitment by European societies towards the less privileged, aimed at empowering them to become full citizens. This is consistent with the respect for human dignity laid down in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The discussions during the Peer Review on the Belgian DIS drew attention to a series of issues to be considered. In particular the following were regarded as crucial:

1. social integration should be a permanent and universal right;
2. contracts should be a tool in the relationship between services and client instead of being just a means of control or sanctions;
3. activation should be considered as a complex path (social integration, training, etc) instead of a mere job placement;
4. work should be considered as a meaningful experience instead of being perceived as a compulsion and punishment;
5. a multidimensional approach should be envisaged and 'one-stop-shop' services should be developed;
6. the causes of non-take-up of social policies should be understood and addressed explicitly;
7. coordination between different services is one of the key elements for a successful practice;
8. national laws should avoid excessive territorial variability, without impeding context-related local insertion policies;
9. monitoring and evaluation should become a permanent component of the assessment of outcome.

All actors should be made aware of the need to embed these issues in the different contexts, both in considering the design of the policies and in the potential practices.



ANNEX

Tab. A.1. Socio-economic and social expenditure indicators for selected EU countries

2004	Univer- salistic	Conservative		Fami- listic	Neo- liberal	EU	
	DK	BE	GER	IT	UK	EU-15	EU-25
Population							
<i>Old age index¹</i>	22,3	26,0	25,9	26,9	23,7	25,0	24,1
<i>% population aged > 65</i>	14,9	17,1	18,0	19,2	17,1	17,0	16,5
<i>Fertility rate³</i>	1,18	1,61	1,34	1,29	1,71	1,48	1,52
<i>Births out of wedlock⁴</i>	44,8	29,5	26,2	10,8	43,1	31,4	30,2
<i>Divorce⁵</i>	2,8	3,0	2,5	0,7	2,7	2,0	2,0
Employment rates⁶							
<i>Male (15-64)</i>	79,7	67,9	70,8	70,1	77,8	72,7	70,9
<i>Female (15-64)</i>	71,6	52,6	59,2	45,2	65,6	56,8	55,7
<i>Youth (15-24)</i>	8,4	19,8	15,1	23,6	12,1	16,6	18,6
<i>% of fixed term contracts*</i>	9,5	8,7	12,6	11,8	6,0	13,6	13,7
Unemployment rates							
<i>Male (15-64)⁷</i>	5,1	7,0	8,7	6,4	5,1	7,1	8,1
<i>Female (15-64)⁷</i>	5,6	8,8	10,5	10,5	4,2	9,3	10,2
<i>Youth (15-24)⁷</i>	8,2	19,8	15,1	23,6	12,1	16,6	18,6
<i>Long-term (15-64)⁸</i>	22,9	50,8	50,0	49,4	20,2	43,4	n.a
Expenditure on social protection							
<i>Per capita in PPS¹⁰</i>	8095,4	7131,0	7291,7	6266,3	7002,0	6270,0	6747,6
<i>As % of GDP¹¹</i>	29,5	27,5	29,8	25,6	27,2	27,5	n.a
<i>(2002) On Family/children¹²</i>	13,4	8,5	10,7	3,9	6,7	8,0	n.a.
<i>On old age and survivors¹²</i>	37,6	43,8	42,5	61,9	46,4	45,8	46,2
<i>On labour policies¹³</i>	4,63	3,65	3,31	1,20	0,75	n.a	n.a
<i>On active labour policies¹³</i>	1,58	1,25	1,18	0,57	0,37	n.a	n.a
<i>Unemployed covered¹⁴</i>	63,8	85,5	72,3	4,4	26,2	n.a	n.a
Poverty							
<i>60% median pre-transfers¹⁶</i>	32	29	24	22 (2001)	26	24 (2001)	24 (2001)
<i>60% median post-transfers¹⁶</i>	12	15	15	19 (2001)	18	16 (2001)	15 (2001)
<i>Gini index</i>	22	28	25	29	31	n.a	n.a
Competitiveness¹⁷							
<i>Growth 2003-ranking</i>	5	25	13	47	11	n.a	n.a
<i>Business 2003-ranking</i>	7	14	3	34	6	n.a	n.a



- 1 Old age index: people over 65 as a percentage of the working age population (15-64) (source: Eurostat 2003a).
- 2 Children (0-14) living in families with only one adult as a percentage of all children living in families with two adults (source: Eurostat 2003b).
- 3 Estimated values for 2003. Source: Eurostat (2005) .
- 4 As a percentage of all live births. DK GER UK EU-15 EU-25 estimated values for 2003. BE and IT Estimated values for 2002 (source: Eurostat 2005).
- 5 Per 1000 persons in 2002. IT, UK, EU-15 and EU-25 estimated values (source: Eurostat 2005).
- 6 Source: Eurostat (2005) Employed persons as a share of the total population aged 15-64, data refer to 2004.
- 7 Source: Eurostat (2005).
- 8 Long-term unemployed (12 months or more) as percentage of all unemployed Eurostat Labour Force, statistics 2004.
- 9 Source Eurostat Labour force survey 2004.
- 10 In PPS (purchasing power standards) Estimated values for 2002 (source: Eurostat 2005).
- 11 Estimated values for 2001 source: Eurostat (2005) Year book 2004.
- 12 As a percentage of social benefits (source: Eurostat 2003b).
- 13 As a percentage of GDP. Years: BE 2003, DK 2000, GER 2002, IT 2002, OECD Employment outlook 2005.
- 14 Unemployed covered by unemployment benefits. Source: ECHP version 2001, data refer to 1998 (wave 5). Calculations by Carbone (2003).
- 15 Guaranteed Minimum Income (social assistance and existing relevant benefits/allowances) for one parent plus one child aged 2 years 11 months. PPP= purchasing power parities (Euro=1). Situation 31st July 2001 (source: Bradshaw and Finch 2002).
- 16 Eurostat (2003a). First year 1995, last year 2000.
- 17 Source: World economic Forum (2005). The CGI (Competitiveness Growth Index) and the BCI (Business Competitiveness Index) aim at ranking countries according to the factors that favour the growth and business of an economy. It considers at its very basis a mix of qualitative and quantitative sets of indicators and a survey conducted on 7,707 senior business leaders in 101 countries. The report and full methodological details are available online at: www.weforum.org. Retrieved: 15 September 2005.

Table A.2. Evolution in the distribution of minimum income beneficiaries by age (%)

Age	1990	1999
<25	11.7	26.0
25-29	11.4	11.8
30-34	11.8	9.8
35-39	12.6	10.5
40-44	12.8	10.4
45-49	9.4	9.5
50-54	10.1	8.7
55-59	9.7	6.6
60-64	5.4	3.7
>65	5.0	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, quoted in Groenez and Nicaise, 2002.

Table A.3. Minimum income dependency over a period of 3 years by age in 1996 (%).

Dependency spell	18-24 years	25+	All ages
6 months	19	11	13
7-12 months	31	17	20
13-24 months	30	22	24
25-35 months	12	15	14
36 months	8	36	29
Total	100 (N = 18,957)	100 (N = 54,583)	100 (N = 73,540)

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs, quoted in Groenez and Nicaise, 2002.



Table A.4. DIS recipients by age in the different Regions, 2003				
	Flanders	Wallonia	Brussels	Belgium
0 - 17	0,08%	0,12%	0,04%	0,09%
18 - 19	4,18%	5,54%	2,72%	4,48%
20 - 24	17,28%	20,21%	16,99%	18,56%
25 - 29	8,87%	8,47%	13,34%	9,68%
30 - 34	8,30%	8,52%	12,44%	9,32%
35 - 39	9,68%	10,02%	11,99%	10,35%
40 - 44	10,67%	11,40%	10,78%	11,03%
45 - 49	9,36%	11,07%	8,53%	9,96%
50 - 54	9,29%	9,93%	7,62%	9,21%
55 - 59	10,00%	8,62%	6,93%	8,68%
60 - 64	8,08%	4,28%	4,97%	5,64%
65 - 69	2,29%	1,03%	1,78%	1,60%
70+	1,93%	0,80%	1,87%	1,40%
TOT	100,01%	100,01%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: http://socialassistance.fgov.be/Fr/themes/Stats/Beleidsnota/RMI_3.html

Table A.5. Basic socio-economic indicators by Region, 1990 and 2003		
	Primary income of households per capita (Belgium = 100)	Unemployment rate
<i>Flanders</i>		
1990	105,1	9,7
2003	108,2	7,9
<i>Wallonia</i>		
1990	87,7	21,4
2003	85,7	19,9

Source: Van Gompel, 2004



REFERENCES

- Atkinson, T. Cantillon, B.; Marlier, E. & Nolan, B. (2005), *Taking forward the EU social inclusion process*. An independent Report commissioned by the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Barbier, J.C. (2001), *Welfare to work policies in Europe. The current challenges*, Document de Travail, <http://www.cee-recherche.fr>
- Bardone, L. & Guio, A. C. (2005), *In-Work Poverty. New commonly agreed indicators at the EU level*, Eurostat, Statistics in Focus, 5/2005.
- Boeri, T. (2003), *Social Policy: one for all?* Working Paper, Retrieved August 2005 at: <http://www.cepremap.cnrs.fr/gatti/boeri.pdf>
- Cantillon, B. et al. (2003) *The evolution of minimum income protection in 15 European countries, 1992-2001*, mimeo.
- CERC – Conseil Emploi Revenus Cohésion Sociale (2004) *Les enfants pauvres en France*, rapport n. 4, Paris, www.cerc.gouv.fr.
- CERC (2005) *Les minima sociaux. Social minima*, Online Information Service, <http://www.cerc.gouv.fr/sitedoc/minima/minimac3.html> retrieved 12-09-05.
- Commission of the European Communities. 1997. *Modernizing and Improving Social Protection in the European Union*. Communication from the Commission, COM(97) 102 final.
- De Maesschalck and Verbist, (2005) *Interregional social transfers in Belgium: would further devolution lead to more inequality?* paper presented at the Fribourg ESPANET conference 22-24/09/05.
- Dewilde, C. & Vranken, J. (2005), *Mesure multidimensionnelle de la Pauvreté au sein de l'Union européenne: une approche catégorielle*, in « Revue Belge de Sécurité Sociale » 1/2005, pp. 21-58.
- Ditch, J. (1999), *The structure and dynamics of Social assistance in the European Union*, in Heikkilä, M. (ed.), *Linking welfare and work*, European Foundation, Dublin, pp. 59-70.
- Ditch, J., et al. (1997). *Comparative Social Assistance. Localisation and Discretion*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd. Athenaeum Press, Ltd., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.
- Ditch, J. (1999a). *Full Circle: A Second Coming for Social Assistance?* Teok-sessa (toim.) Clasen, J. Comparative Social Policy. Concepts, theories and method. Blackwell Publisher.
- Ditch, J. (1999b). *The Structure and Dynamics of Social Assistance in the European Union. Linking Welfare and Work*. European Foundation, Dublin.



- Ditch, J and Roberts, E. (2002) *Integrated approaches to active welfare and employment policies*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin
- Eardly, T., Bradshaw, J., Ditch, J. & Whiteford, P. (1996a). *Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Volume I Synthesis Reports*. DSS 1274 Social Policy Research Unit, University of York.
- Eardly, T., Bradshaw, J., Ditch, J. & Whiteford, P. (1996b). *Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Volume II Country Reports*. DSS 1274 Social Policy Research Unit, University of York.
- Ernst and Young (2004), *Etude des effets de l'instauration de la loi concernant le droit a l'integration sociale*.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*. University Press, Oxford.
- Ferrera, M. (1998), The Four Social Europes: between universalism and selectivity, in Rhodes, M. and Meny, Y. (eds.), *The Future of the European Welfare State: A New Social Contract?*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- Ferrera, M. (ed.) (2005), *Welfare State Reform in Southern Europe*, Routledge, London.
- Finn, D. (2000), *Welfare to Work: the local dimension*, Journal of European Social Policy, 10, pp. 43-57
- Geldof, D. (1999), *New Activation Policies: Promises and Risks. Linking Welfare and Work*. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin.
- Groenez, S. & Nicaise, I. (2002) *Traps and springboards in European minimum income systems: the Belgian case*.
- Guibentif, P. & Bouget, D. (1997), *Minimum Income Policies in the European Union*. União das Mutualidades Portuguesas. HP, Estúdio Gráfico, Lisboa.
- Gullenstad, M. e Segalen, M. (eds.) (1997), *Family and Kinship in Europe*, Pinter, London.
- Hoelscher, P. (2004), *A thematic study using transnational comparisons to analyse and identify what combination of policy responses are most successful in preventing and reducing high levels o child poverty*, Final report submitted to the European Commission, DG Employment.
- Leibfried, S. (1991), *Towards a European Welfare State? On Integrating Poverty Regimes in the European Community*, Bremen, CeS Working Paper, 2/1991.
- Heikkilä, M. e Keskitalo, E. (eds.) (2001), *Social Assistance in Europe. A comparative study on minimum income in seven European countries*, Stakes, Helsinki.



- Jessop, B. (2002) *The Future of the Capitalist State*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Julemont, Ghislaine (2005) *L'individualisation du droit à la sécurité sociale. Une réflexion sur les revendications des mouvements féminins*, in « Revue Belge de la Sécurité Sociale », n. 1 2005, Service Public Fédéral Sécurité Sociale, Bruxelles, pp. 127-162.
- Kazepov, Y. (2000), *Italia, Europa: Il Reddito Minimo di Inserimento*, in "Prospettive Sociali e Sanitarie", numero monografico sulla riforma della legge assistenziale, nr. 20-22, pp. 44-47.
- Kazepov, Y. (2001), The law and the poor: institutional support and economic need in Italy, in: Kjønstad, A. Robson, P. (eds.), *Poverty and the Law*, Hart Publishing. Oxford, pp. 17-34.
- Kazepov, Y. (2003), Local Policies against Poverty. The role of Social Assistance and Activation Measures in Europe, in Henning, A.; Krause, H-U., Leinter, H. und Lübke, I. (Hrsg), *Im Dickicht der Städte*, IGfH-Eigenverlag, Frankfurt/M, pp. 83-98.
- Kazepov, Y. (ed.) (2004) *Cities of Europe. Changing Contexts, Local Arrangements and the Challenge to Urban Cohesion*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Kazepov, Y. Garcia, M. (2002), Why some people are more on benefits than others? Ways into social assistance, in Saraceno C. (ed.), *Social Assistance Dynamics in Europe. National and Local Poverty Regimes*, Polity press, Bristol/London, pp. 127-172.
- Kazepov Y. Sabatinelli S. (2001), *How Generous Social Assistance Schemes are. A Comparative Analysis of Benefit Levels in Europe*, Stakes Series, Helsinki.
- Kazepov Y. Sabatinelli, S. (2002), Integrated approaches to active welfare and employment policies in Italy, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, <http://www.eurofound.ie/publications/files/EF0269EN.pdf>
- Korpi, W. and Palme, J. (1998), *The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality and Poverty in the Western Countries*. American Sociological Review, Vol 63: 661-687.
- Leibfried, S. (1992), Towards a European welfare state: on integrating poverty regimes in the European Community, in Ferge Z., Kolberg J.E., (ed), *Social policy in a changing Europe*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Leisering, L. e Leibfried, S. (1999), *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lemaitre, S. (2005) *Les CPAS à l'épreuve de l'insertion socio-professionnelle*, in « Revue Belge de la Sécurité Sociale », n. 1 2005, Service Public Fédéral Sécurité Sociale, Bruxelles, pp. 77-93.



- Lødemel, I. & Trickey, H. (Eds.) (2001), *An offer you can't refuse: Workfare in international perspective*. The Policy Press. University of Bristol.
- L'Horty, Y. (2005), *Que nous apprennent les beneficiaries du RMI sur le gains du retour à l'emploi?* CEE, Rapport de Recherche.
- Marlier, E. e Cohen Sahal, M. (2000), *Social benefits and their redistributive effect in the EU*, in "Statistics in Focus", Eurostat, 2/2000.
- Mingione, E. (ed.) (1996), *Urban poverty and the Underclass*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Nicaise, I. (2002), *Giving Fish or teaching to fish? A cost-benefit analysis of Belgian employment-training projects for minimum income recipients*, "Public Finance and Management" 2 (2), pp. 272-293.
- Nicaise, I. and Groenez, S. (2004), *The big holes in the net. Structural gaps in social protection and guaranteed minimum income systems in 13 EU countries*, Report to DG Employment and Social Affairs and Belgian Ministry of Social Integration.
- Nicaise, I. et al. (2004), *Policy at work. Local implementation of the Belgian National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, Report of the Belgian non-governmental experts to the EU Commission.
- OECD (1998a), *The battle against Exclusion. Social assistance in Australia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom*. Paris.
- OECD (1998b), *The battle against Exclusion. Social assistance in Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Norway*. Paris.
- OECD (1999), *The battle against Exclusion. Social assistance in Canada and Switzerland*. Paris.
- Palme, J. and Wennemo, T. (1998) *Swedish social security in the 1990s: reform and retrenchment*, The Cabinet Office and Ministries, Stockholm.
- Roche, M. & Annesley, C. (1998), *Comparative Social Inclusion Policy in Europe*. TSER Thematic Research Project, Report 1, Volume 1. Sheffield University.
- Saraceno, C. (ed.) (2002), *Social Assistance Dynamics in Europe. National and Local Poverty Regimes*, Polity Press, Bristol.
- Serrano, A. (2002) *Are European activation policies converging?* Contribution for the IREC conference, Aalborg, 28 august 2002.
- Smeesters et al, (2000) *Résumé Minimex*, mimeo
- Van Machelen, N. (2005) *The administration of social assistance schemes in Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands*, paper presented at the Fribourg ESPANET conference 22-24/09/05.
- Veit-Wilson, J. (1998), *Setting adequacy standards. How governments define minimum incomes*. The Polity Press. Antony Rowe Ltd., Chippenham.
- Vranken, Jan (2004) *Pauvreté et exclusion sociale: un cadre conceptuel*, in « Revue Belge de Sécurité Sociale » 4/2004, pp. 749-762.



WEB SITES

BELGIAN MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

http://socialassistance.fgov.be/Fr/themes/Stats/Beleidsnota/RMI_3.html

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS

www.eurofound.eu.int/

EUROSTAT

<http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/>

OECD

www.oecd.org

REVUE BELGE DE SECURITE SOCIALE

<http://socialsecurity.fgov.be/bib/rbss.htm>

Important Link: www.mi-is.be

This is the website of the *S.P.P. Intégration Sociale* and contains most relevant information on the best practice investigated and presented in this paper. The information is on both the legal framework of reference as well as the data produced so far and on the evaluation studies. The website is constantly updated with new legislative dispositions.

Municipalities, public offices and local stakeholders use a protected part of this website as an interface to exchange information.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPAS	Centre Public d'Action Sociale – French name
OCMW	Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn – Flemish name
PCSW	Public Centres for Social Welfare – English name
DIS	Droit à l'Intégration Sociale
FOREM	Office communautaire et régional de la FORMation et de l'EMPloi
Minimex	Minimum de moyen d'existence
ORBEM/BGDA	Office Régional Bruxellois de l'Emploi
PES	Public employment service
RMI (France)	Revenue Minimum d'Insertion
RMI (Italy)	Reddito Minimo d'Inserimento
VDAB	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding